

## *William Bradford, Colonial Printer A Tercentenary Review*

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ON MAY 20, 1863, an address was delivered by John William Wallace at Cooper Union in New York City on the occasion of the celebration by The New-York Historical Society of the 200th anniversary of the birth of William Bradford, pioneer printer for the colonies of Pennsylvania and New York. Later that year it was printed, with additions and an appendix to form the fullest biography of this prominent but hazy figure in the annals of American printing. The account is long-winded, full of pomp but short on circumstance. Despite this and the fact that considerable interest has been shown in him by scholars for over one hundred years, an adequate biography has never materialized. Bradford's papers never have come to light and only gradually has fragmentary information been discovered which reveals certain highlights of Bradford's career, only to emphasize the shadows surrounding the course of his life.

One hundred years later, in this tercentenary year, we would do well to recast what we know of his long career—a career covering a period of sixty years. Beginning in Philadelphia, having been appointed printer for the Society of Friends there, he was a defender of the freedom of the press, some forty years before John Peter Zenger fought for the same cause, and a partner in the establishment of America's first paper mill. Then, in New York, he was printer for the Crown, bookseller, publisher of New York's first newspaper, vestryman of Trinity Church; and in New Jersey was official printer for the colony, Clerk of the Provincial

Council, owner and operator of a paper mill, a farmer of the excise and land owner.

Evidence is now indisputable that William Bradford was born on May 20, 1663, in Barwell, Leicestershire, England,<sup>1</sup> the son of William and Ann Bradford. Young Bradford was apprenticed to Andrew Sowle, a prominent printer of Friends books in London. Sowle may well have been acquainted with William's father who, it is inferred, had also been a printer and who died in 1667 when his son was but four years of age.<sup>2</sup> Sowle was, in fact, a man of some distinction in Friends circles. He was known both to George Fox and William Penn and had been a witness to the signing of the original charter of Pennsylvania. It is not surprising, therefore, that his apprentice joined the Society of Friends and was selected as printer for the Quaker colony—or that Bradford married Elizabeth Sowle, daughter of his employer,<sup>3</sup> on April 28, 1685, in Devonshire Meeting.<sup>4</sup> Later that year (probably in mid-August), William and his bride embarked for Philadelphia, bringing with them his press and printing materials and a letter from Fox introducing him to the Quaker colony as "a civil young man and convinced of truth," who would not only "set up the trade of printing Friends books" but would also supply the colony with English Friends publications.<sup>5</sup>

Bradford, shortly after his arrival, probably in November, 1685, set up his printing office in Oxford township near Philadelphia where he continued to live and work until his removal

<sup>1</sup> Barwell should not be confused with Barnwell, a village in Northamptonshire. The Barwell Parish Church baptismal records show that he was baptized on May 30, 1663.

<sup>2</sup> Ms. Burial Records, Barwell Parish Church (Barwell, Leicestershire, England).

<sup>3</sup> Anna Janney DeArmand, *Andrew Bradford, Colonial Journalist* (Newark, Del., 1949), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Society of Friends 833; Ms. Register Book of Marriages, Quarterly Meeting of London and Middlesex (General Register Office, Somerset House, London). The certificate lists Bradford as of the Parish of Shoreditch and refers to his deceased father as "Husbandman." Witnesses to the marriage numbered thirty-four, including Andrew Sowle, Tace, his wife, and Ann Bradford, William's mother.

<sup>5</sup> John William Wallace, *An Address delivered at the . . . Two Hundredth Birth Day of Mr. William Bradford* (Albany, N.Y., 1863), p. 24.

to New York. Lawrence Wroth has shown that he was not the first printer in the middle colonies as had previously been claimed.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Bradford, pioneering his trade in Pennsylvania, did not lack for work. The first book to come from his press was his *Kalendarium . . . Being an Almanack For the Year of Grace 1686* which he printed in December of 1685. This first venture was also a harbinger of troubles concerning restrictions on his press. Immediately following its publication, the Provincial Council ordered that the words "Lord Penn" be blotted out of all copies of the almanac as being contrary to Quaker tenets and that Bradford henceforth print nothing "but what shall have Lycence from ye Councill."<sup>7</sup>

Scarcely a year later a second conflict developed, this time with the Monthly Meeting of Philadelphia held the fifth day, tenth month, 1687, when it was ordered that Bradford "do shew what may concern friends or Truth before printing to the Quarterly Meeting of Philadelphia, and if it require speed then to the monthly meeting where it may belong." The Meeting also directed Bradford to collect all copies of Daniel Leed's *Almanack for 1688*, which he had just printed, because they contained some light frivolous paragraphs which gave offense to Friends. In this he obeyed and all copies were destroyed. The Meeting afterwards paid him £4 as the value of the copies.<sup>8</sup>

A third conflict occurred in 1689 when Joseph Growdon, a member of the Provincial Council engaged Bradford to print the Charter of Pennsylvania. Since the publication was contrary to an earlier vote of the Council not to have the charter printed, Bradford was once more in trouble, this time on circumstantial evidence because he omitted his imprint. This early conflict revolving around the freedom of the press was undoubtedly instigated by the fact that to many, the lack of a published version

<sup>6</sup> Lawrence C. Wroth, "The St. Mary's City Press—A New Chronology of American Printing," *The Colophon*, n.s., I (Winter, 1936), 333-357.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, January 9, 1685/6, I, 165.

<sup>8</sup> "Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Philadelphia, 1682-1714," Wilberforce Eames, Ms. Notes, 41 (New York Public Library).

of their laws kept them in ignorance of their rights and privileges. This also involved the right to print them and Bradford was brought before Governor Blackwell on April 9. An account of his interview was written by Bradford himself.<sup>9</sup> According to his account, he declined to confess to publishing it, claiming that he was not bound to testify against himself and that he had heard of no law which prevented him from printing what might come to hand. In a spirited statement, he declared that printing "is my employ, my trade and calling, and that by which I get my living, to print; and if I may not print such things as come to my hand which are innocent, I cannot live. . . . If I print one thing to-day, and the contrary party bring me another tomorrow, to contradict it, I cannot say that I shall not print it. Printing is a manufacture of the nation, and therefore ought rather be encouraged than suppressed."

The following month Bradford, not prospering as he had hoped, and seeming to be continuously in potential conflict with the wishes of the Council and the Society of Friends, applied to his Monthly Meeting for a certificate for himself and family, informing them of his intention to return to England. The fact of the matter was that his father-in-law, Andrew Sowle, had decided to retire from business and had offered Bradford the opportunity to take over the establishment. He was further encouraged in the venture by some of the leading Quakers in London who were desirous of having Sowle's press continue in their cause. Consequently, he sent his wife and their children, Andrew, born about 1686, and William, Jr., born about 1688,<sup>10</sup> to England and made preparations to follow later himself.<sup>11</sup> However, the beginnings of a quarrel among the Philadelphia Quakers and the fact that the subsequent Yearly Meeting agreed to grant him a yearly salary of

<sup>9</sup> Now owned by The New-York Historical Society, New York City.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Purple, *Genealogical Memorials of William Bradford the Printer* (New York, 1873), pp. 3-8. A daughter Tacy is also listed. Her birth date is unknown, but she married John Hyat of Philadelphia.

<sup>11</sup> Ms. Letter, William Bradford to John Chamberlayne, New York, September 12, 1709, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, A, V, nos. 18 & 53 (Library of Congress transcript).

£40 and all the business they could throw his way succeeded in persuading him to remain and to recall his family.<sup>12</sup> In 1691, as further inducement, the Yearly Meeting "agreed that of all the books printed with the advice of Friends, the Quarterly Meeting should take at least two hundred copies."

So, William Bradford continued to print in Philadelphia and to seek additional means of augmenting his income. As early as 1686, he had entered into an arrangement with John Bowne of Flushing, Long Island, as agent for the sale and distribution of his books and those which he was importing from England. Gerald McDonald in his essay on "William Bradford's Book Trade and John Bowne, Long Island Quaker" gives an enlightening account of these activities which continued until 1691. He points out that Bradford, in the days of his apprenticeship to Andrew Sowle, had ample opportunity to learn of the efficient methods employed by Friends in distributing their publications.<sup>13</sup> Also in 1688, he proposed the truly enormous undertaking of printing on a subscription basis, in folio, the Holy Bible complete with marginal notes at a price of 20s. per Bible, or at 22s. with the Book of Common Prayer included.<sup>14</sup> Despite the fact that only one-half the price was payable in silver with the remainder in country produce at money prices, there is no indication that it was ever published, a discouragement which must have fostered in part his desire to return to England.

In 1690, he became part owner of a paper mill. In that year Samuel Carpenter rented, for five shillings yearly for 990 years, twenty acres of land to a company composed of Robert Turner, William Bradford, Thomas Tresse, William Rittenhouse and others. Rittenhouse, a papermaker from Holland, erected the mill on a riverlet to be known as Paper Mill Run near its emergence into Wissahickon Creek in Roxborough, Phila-

<sup>12</sup> Wallace, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> Frederick R. Goff, ed., *Essays Honoring Lawrence C. Wroth* (Portland, 1951), pp. 209-222.

<sup>14</sup> William Bradford, *Proposals for Printing a Large Bible, 1688*, owned by Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

delphia County.<sup>15</sup> The enterprise was successful and provided Bradford with a much more assured supply of paper for his operations. Even after his removal to New York in 1693, he continued to depend on the mill and in 1697 when he rented his share to the Rittenhouses in consideration of a quantity of paper to be supplied yearly, he also obtained the refusal of all the printing paper they made at ten shillings per ream. Bradford retained part ownership until 1704 when the Rittenhouses induced him to part with his share.

The climax to Bradford's career in Pennsylvania came in 1692 when a serious clash arose between George Keith, a dissident Quaker who was master of the Friends school in Philadelphia, and the Society of Friends. Keith's strong criticisms, some of which were printed on Bradford's press, threatened a division among the Friends. Consequently when his broadside, *An Appeal from the twenty-eight Judges to the Spirit of Truth*, appeared the Quakers considered it sufficient grounds for legal action against Keith. Bradford was also taken into custody. He was accused of having printed seditious matter and, because he did not include his name in the imprint, he was accused of violating an Act of Parliament of 1662 prohibiting publications not bearing the printers' name,<sup>16</sup> a provision which the Quakers themselves had excelled in evading in England. Keith was found guilty but Bradford, after a trial in which the jurors disagreed, was ultimately released. At the trial, he conducted his own defense demanding that the jury was not only to find whether he had printed the broadside, but also whether the subject matter was actually seditious.<sup>17</sup> This was overruled by the judge, but it is interesting to note that the question was to arise again forty-three years later in the trial of John Peter Zenger when his attorney, Andrew Hamilton, successfully argued the same point upon which hinged the entire concept of the freedom of the press.

<sup>15</sup> Horatio Gates Jones, "Historical Sketch of the Rittenhouse Paper Mill," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History*, XX (1896), 318-330.

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Colonial Printer* (N.Y., 1931), p. 28.

<sup>17</sup> Wallace, p. 55.

In the case of Bradford, an accident probably accounted for the failure to convict him rather than the brilliance of any legal argument. The event, which is well known, occurred when the prosecuting attorney introduced as evidence the form on which the broadside had been printed and the foreman of the jury began to pass it among the jurymen for a closer inspection. At this point, the quoins became loose and the type fell from the chase to be reduced to pi on the floor.<sup>18</sup>

There is disagreement concerning events subsequent to the trial. Bradford claims that he was not discharged from prison until Governor Fletcher came to Philadelphia and reviewed his case on April 27, 1693. He stated, “. . . we [John McComb and Bradford] made application several times to the Quaker Magistrates for our enlargement but could not obtain it. Wherefore upon Governour Fletchers coming to that Province, George Keith made application to him for our enlargement and I myself made application by my Petition to said Governour Fletcher . . . whereupon the Governour appointed a Committee of the Council to examine into the cause of our Imprisonment, who made Report. . . . Then I was sent for before Governour and Council and the Governour asked me several questions concerning our Imprisonment. To which having answered, I was ordered to withdraw. In a little time I was called in again and Governour Fletcher told me that he found our Imprisonment was occasioned by a Religious Difference and therefore had ordered that I and my fellow Prisoner should be discharged. . . . I also requested the favour that he would please order my Printing Tools to be restored to me which had been taken away from me. Whereupon the Governour sent for John White the Sheriff and ordered him to Return my said Tools, which were lodg'd in Samuells Jenings' House. From this time we were discharged from our Imprisonment and not before . . .”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Wallace, pp. 56-57.

<sup>19</sup> [George Keith], *Some brief Remarks upon a late Book, entitled George Keith once more brought to the Test* [New York, William Bradford, 1704], copies at JCB, LC, HSP.

His statement is refuted, however, by Samuel Jennings who claims the sheriff allowed them to go home on parole<sup>20</sup> and by John McComb, Bradford's fellow prisoner, who also claimed they were set at liberty before the intervention of Governor Fletcher.<sup>21</sup> Since Bradford printed at least four items in Philadelphia in 1693 before leaving for New York, it seems obvious that he was not actually confined during the period in question and was in fact allowed the use of his equipment.

Bradford had cancelled his contract to print for the Philadelphia Quakers on April 29, 1692,<sup>22</sup> and so he was free to accept an offer by the Provincial Council of New York who had offered as inducements for a printer to come to New York, an annual salary of £40 and the benefit of whatever public printing he could procure as well.<sup>23</sup> With his employment there beginning April 10, 1693, and his removal from Philadelphia, a chapter of his life came to a close.

Seventy items are attributed to his Philadelphia press, although in the seven and one-half years of his residence there he probably printed more. His work in Philadelphia, however, was small indeed compared with what awaited him in New York. Eames lists thirty-eight items from his press, located in Pearl Street at what is now number 81, during his first year of printing including the first edition of the Laws and Acts of the General Assembly of New York, a considerable number of proclamations and session laws. It has not been possible to positively identify the first book printed by him in New York. Wilberforce Eames in his *First Year of Printing in New York* tentatively lists as number one, Keith & Budd's *New-England's Spirit of Persecution Transmitted to Pennsylvania . . .* which he states was probably printed in May. A. S. W. Rosenbach, however, believed John Philly's *A Paraphrastical Exposition . . .* to be first (Eames 2) since the *Spirit*

<sup>20</sup> Samuel Jennings, *The State of The Case Briefly but Impartially given* (London, 1694), preface.

<sup>21</sup> Keith, *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> Wallace, p. 63.

<sup>23</sup> I. N. Phelps Stokes, *An Iconography of Manhattan Island* (N.Y., 1915-1928), Chronology, 1693, March 23.



of *Persecution* on p. 22 contains a reference to "Mordecai" which is the theme of *A Paraphractical Exposition*. Bradford's business was steady and came from private work as well as the publication of ordinances and laws for the City and a variety of work for the Crown.

If his work was steady, his pay was not, at least insofar as the Provincial Council was concerned. In 1695, Bradford had begun printing the *Votes of Assembly* and in consideration of this additional labor, his salary was raised to £60<sup>24</sup>. In 1702, it was raised again to £75. By 1708, however, Bradford was petitioning the governor and Council for salary and money due him totaling £540:8:1 and covering a period from 1699 to date. His petition cites an Order of Council of January 6, 1703, to the effect that he was to receive his salary quarterly as the rest of the civil officers of the government, but states that the collector had taken no notice of the governor's order and refused to pay his quarterly warrants even in proportion to the other civil officers; in consequence of which his family was now "near the brink of Ruin." Governor Cornbury ordered an investigation which resulted in a warrant for payment being issued.<sup>25</sup> Bradford was not paid the full amount, however, for on October 30, 1708, an act of legislature was passed for raising a fund for defraying some extraordinary charges occurring in the colony and it awarded Bradford only £252:18.<sup>26</sup> It was not until 1714 that he was finally paid all monies due him.<sup>27</sup>

Although his numerous petitions for payment suggest that Bradford during these years was having considerable financial difficulty, the petition of Joan Dewsbury to Governor Bellomont in 1698 for relief against Bradford indicates that he was a creditor as well as a debtor.<sup>28</sup> In November of that year, following the death of John Dewsbury of Oyster Bay, Long Island, his widow in her petition claimed that Bradford, who had lent her husband

<sup>24</sup> Stokes, *Chronology*, 1695, July 3.

<sup>25</sup> Stokes, *Chronology*, 1708, September 13.

<sup>26</sup> Ms. New York Council Minutes, X, 451 (New York State Library, Albany, N.Y.).

<sup>27</sup> *Colonial Laws of New York* (Albany, N.Y., 1894), I, 630, 816, 949, 955. *Journal of the Votes of the General Assembly of New York, 1691-1765* (N.Y., 1764-66), I, 350, [354], 358.

<sup>28</sup> *New York Colonial Documents*, XLII, 108.

several considerable sums of money and who, upon her husband's death, had obtained letters of administration from Governor Fletcher, had presented an account against the estate and had taken control of much more than the value of the debt despite the fact that he had promised only to assist her. He had, she declared, acted in a most arbitrary manner, carrying away her household goods, bedding, cattle, winter provisions, and threatened to take what little remained of her goods and the corn out of the barn. She further declared that she was without means of support for herself and family, being near seventy years old and in poor health. Considerable litigation must have followed, for it was not until 1705 that it appears to have been settled. In that year, the Fifth Session of the General Assembly passed an act to enable William Bradford to sell and dispose of the real estate of the late John Dewsbury for the payment of his debts.<sup>29</sup>

Joan Dewsbury's petition to Governor Bellomont preceded by two years an altercation between the governor and Bradford which briefly threatened to end his career as printer for the colony. In an effort to strengthen his friendship with the northern Indians, the Earl of Bellomont had spent a week in Albany in conference with them undergoing "the greatest fatigue I ever underwent in my whole life," he wrote, having been in a close chamber with fifty Sachems who were liberally annointed with bear's grease and who continuously smoked tobacco and drank rum.<sup>30</sup> Upon his return, he wished an account of his adventures to be printed at public charge. Bradford, however, evidently did not consider the private accounts of his experiences as a part of the public documents he was engaged to print for his £60 yearly and consequently conveniently became quite ill and unable to print. On the 17th of October, 1700, Bellomont in a letter to the Board of Trade wrote, "Our printer being sick, I could not have my private diary of conference with the Indians published."<sup>31</sup> On October 31, however, the minutes of the Council state that

<sup>29</sup> *Laws & Acts of the General Assembly* (New York, 1694), New York State Library copy with Acts of the Fifth Session, 1705 appended.

<sup>30</sup> *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York* (Albany, 1854), IV, 714.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 714.

"Whereas Mr. Bradford, the Printer hath wholly, for these four months past neglected his duty in printing the proclamation and conferences when his Lordship was in Albany, his Excellency had therefore thought fit to displace him from his office . . ." <sup>32</sup> Fortunately, for Bradford, however, the displacement was not permanent, for his name appears again as printer for Lt. Governor Nanfan's proclamations in January, 1701, and two months later the Earl of Bellomont died.

Upon his removal to New York and following his difficulties with the Friends in Philadelphia, Bradford returned to the Church of England and attended Trinity Church, becoming a Vestryman there in 1703. His difficulties in Philadelphia had made his press one of the bulwarks of the Keithian revolt and for years after his removal to New York, his work consisted largely of pamphlets defending the Anglican cause and denouncing the Quaker way of life. Since these efforts brought him more notoriety than profit, a group of Anglican missionaries urged him to print the *Book of Common Prayer* with the Tate and Brady edition of the Psalms which they promised they would help to sell. They also promised to urge the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in London to purchase his edition when supplying missions. To this Bradford agreed and completed the printing by the end of 1706. Beverly McAnear gives an enlightening account of this venture in the *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* <sup>33</sup> and includes a long letter from Bradford to the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel dated September 12, 1709. In it is revealed the fact that upon receipt of the appeal from the missionaries, the Society invited Bradford to send samples of his work. He responded by sending two copies of his *Book of Common Prayer* by separate messengers, neither of which was delivered despite the fact both copies arrived safely in England. Bradford goes on to draw a picture of severe hardship endured by him not only because he had been unable to sell more than fifty copies of the prayer book, but also through his failure to obtain pay-

<sup>32</sup> New York Council Minutes, VIII, 179.

<sup>33</sup> "William Bradford and the Book of Common Prayer," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, XLIII (1949), 101-110.

ment from the government for his public printing. In it he also explains that he had refused an opportunity to return to England four years earlier when Andrew Sowle's daughter, Tace, who had taken over her father's business, offered to let him run it upon her retirement. Despite his tale of woe and the fact that he offered to embark on several business dealings with them, no agreement was reached with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel which subsequently, as if to rub salt in Bradford's wounds, sent over as gifts prayer books and tracts to its missionaries. Bradford had printed 1,000 copies of the *Book of Common Prayer* and in consequence undoubtedly used the sheets with a new title page to issue his second edition of the work in 1710. Trinity Church which had lent him £40 for the venture without interest released him from repayment of the debt.<sup>34</sup>

Fortunately Bradford, as official printer for the Province of New York, was not restricted from printing for other colonies as well. In 1696, he requested and was granted permission from the New York Provincial Council to print for the Colony of Barbados.<sup>35</sup> In 1703, he became official printer for the Province of New Jersey and continued as such until 1736. For his services he was paid an annual salary of £25 which did not include special jobs such as printing bills of credit or the *Votes of Assembly*.<sup>36</sup> In 1710, he was appointed Clerk of the New Jersey Assembly. This was obviously politically inspired as indicated in an extract of a letter from an unidentified member of the Council which states that several of its members "Resolved to have a new Clerk to their Assembly, presuming that Mr. Pinhorne being formerly of the E. of Clarendon's appointment would not be a tool to them; they address the Gov<sup>t</sup> ag<sup>t</sup> him. And though everything they Alleged was false in fact, or no Crime, yet the Governor [Hunter] appointed one Bradford the Printer at New-York in his Room,

<sup>34</sup> Wallace, pp. 81-82.

<sup>35</sup> New York Colonial Manuscripts (English), XLI, 7, September 29, 1696 (New York State Library, Albany, N.Y.).

<sup>36</sup> William Nelson, *First Report of the Public Record Commission of New Jersey, 1899. New Jersey Archives*, 1st ser., IV, 368-9, 371; XIV, 68, 79, 83, 107, 121, 122, 123, 234, 272, 303, 322, 403, 501.

who had been waiting in this Town [Perth Amboy] about a Week before in Expectation of that Place."<sup>37</sup> Bradford held the post until at least 1718 and appears to have received an annual salary of between £20 and £30.<sup>38</sup> In 1710, he also received a temporary appointment with John Johnson and Joseph Billop as commissioners to execute the office of Treasurer of New Jersey.<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps the most potentially lucrative of his appointments in New Jersey was with David Lyell as farmer of the excise. The act of 1716 which appointed them for five years, laid a duty of 12*d.* per gallon on all rum, brandy, wine and other spirits retailed under the quantity of five gallons; 2*s.* per barrel on beer, 6*s.* per gallon for cider. The proceeds were for the support of the government and the act was limited to five years. In return, the farmers of the excise were to pay the Crown £300 yearly. They and their deputies were given the right to enter into all houses and cellars belonging to retailers of strong drink to gauge and take account of all such liquors, and to seize all liquors if the retailers refused to enter into bond to pay the duties. All retailers were to declare to the farmers the quantities and quality of the liquors received.<sup>40</sup> Although the excise did not extend beyond 1721, it appears that Bradford had difficulties with collections and payments, for Council minutes as late as 1728 and 1730 report payments by him in fulfillment of the excise.<sup>41</sup>

With so many ties to New Jersey, it is not surprising to find that Bradford was a land holder in various parts of the province. In addition to his property in Elizabethtown, about which more will be said later, he purchased on May 24, 1727, a tract of 216 acres from Henry Harrison on the Millstone River south of Bound Brook at a price of £230.<sup>42</sup> This may have been the result of a complaint lodged by Bradford in the May, 1726, term of the

<sup>37</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 1st ser., IV, 118-119.

<sup>38</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 1st ser., IV, 185, 368-9, 371.

<sup>39</sup> New York Historical Manuscripts, LIV, 11 (New York State Library, Albany, N.Y.).

<sup>40</sup> Edwin P. Tanner, *The Province of New Jersey, 1664-1738* (N.Y., 1908), 535-6.

<sup>41</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, 1st ser., XIV, 380, 441.

<sup>42</sup> Robert K. Black, Sale catalogue (Upper Montclair, N.J., January, 1956), Item No. 15.

New Jersey Supreme Court for £209:2:5 due him by Harrison who was then living in Rocky Hill.<sup>43</sup> As early as 1715, he had purchased two lots in Perth Amboy<sup>44</sup> and probably built a house there.<sup>45</sup> In fact, on the strength of an imprint in the New Jersey Acts of 1723 which reads "Printed by William Bradford in the City of Perth Amboy, 1723," it is claimed that he also operated for a time a printing establishment there. This point, however, has never been resolved for there are other copies extant with a New York imprint on a title page which is otherwise identical even to breaks and imperfections in the ruled borders.<sup>46</sup>

While Bradford was serving as Clerk of the New Jersey Assembly and was farming the excise, he was also busy in New York trying by what means he could to acquire land in the Hudson Valley. The rage for land speculation had acquired an intensity which knew no abatement up to the Revolutionary War. Governor Fletcher had set a pattern by granting huge tracts of land to those in his favor. Conspicuous among these was a patent to Captain John Evans for a tract forty miles in length and twenty miles in width in the counties of Ulster and Orange. Under Bello-mont, however, the Assembly had annulled the extravagant grants of Fletcher, including the Evans patent so that in 1709 this land was under the jurisdiction of the Crown. Bradford and Gabriel Ludlow in October of that year petitioned to the Lieutenant Governor and Council for 3,000 acres of land formerly owned by Evans; in consequence of which 2,000 acres were reserved to be granted to them, but for an unknown reason a patent was never issued.<sup>47</sup> Ten years later, on July 13, 1719,

<sup>43</sup> William Bradford, Miscellaneous Ms. (New-York Historical Society, New York).

<sup>44</sup> Douglas C. McMutrie, "A Further Note on the New Jersey Acts of 1723," *Proceedings of New Jersey Historical Society*, LIII (January, 1935), 7.

<sup>45</sup> Elmer T. Hutchinson of Elizabeth, New Jersey, stated to the author that he once saw a photograph of a painting or illustration which, according to a caption, showed the foundations of the house in which William Bradford once resided when in Perth Amboy.

<sup>46</sup> Douglas C. McMutrie, "The Earliest New Jersey Imprint," *Proceedings of New Jersey Historical Society*, L (April, 1932), 191-202; "A Further Note on the New Jersey Acts of 1723," *op. cit.* 1-8. Wilberforce Eames and R. W. G. Vail believe the Acts were printed in New York.

<sup>47</sup> Ms. Land Papers, VII, 63, 66 (New York State Library). Minutes of the Provincial Council, 20 October 1709.

Bradford again presented a petition on behalf of himself, Ludlow, and a new partner, Edward Gatehouse, to Governor Hunter for 3,000 acres of land. This was followed on August 6 by another petition, this time to the Honorable Peter Schuyler, President of the Council, on behalf of himself, Ludlow, and John Johnson for 2,000 acres of land each.<sup>48</sup> The Council responded that before the petition of August 6 could be considered, that of July 13 should be withdrawn and all claims dropped.<sup>49</sup> Since action now apparently seemed remote on the July 13 petition, Ludlow and Bradford, on August 20, in a new petition, relinquished the grant of 1709, receded from the petition of July 13 and asked that that of August 6 be considered favorably.<sup>50</sup> Once more a long wait ensued during which time, no doubt, informal efforts were being made by Bradford for action. Then on September 29, Bradford once more, and this time alone, petitioned Governor Burnet for 2,000 acres. On October 2, a committee of the Council offered their opinion of approval and the next day a warrant was issued by the governor and a survey of the land ordered.<sup>51</sup> The survey was completed and a description filed on May 22 the following year,<sup>52</sup> but once again the final step of preparation of the letters patent and the approval of them by the governor was apparently not forthcoming, for no further reference to Bradford appears in the manuscript Land Papers at the New York State Library.

Although Bradford severed his printing relationships with Pennsylvania when he moved to New York in 1693, some nineteen or twenty years later he helped establish his son Andrew in Philadelphia. Of Andrew's early life little is known, but he was trained by his father and in 1709, when he was made a freeman of the City of New York, he was listed as a printer. He went into partnership with his father in 1710 and through 1712, at least

<sup>48</sup> Ms. Land Papers, VII, 63, 65.

<sup>49</sup> Ms. Land Papers, VII, 66.

<sup>50</sup> Ms. Land Papers, VII, 67.

<sup>51</sup> Ms. Land Papers, VIII, 64.

<sup>52</sup> Ms. Land Papers, VIII, 157.

nine books are known to bear the imprint of William and Andrew. Because the Society of Friends in Philadelphia had never procured the satisfactory services of another printer and the Provincial Assembly were likewise looking for someone to print their laws, Andrew offered his services, was appointed, and set up his own shop there in 1713 to print the current acts and laws.<sup>53</sup> Beginning in that year, books bearing the imprint, "Printed by William Bradford in New York and Andrew Bradford in Philadelphia" appeared and a close bond of mutual assistance between father and son continued for many years.

Bradford's enterprises and keen ambition to make money, at times, led him into what, by today's standards, appear to be sharp and unethical practices. In 1714, the New York Colonial Assembly authorized an issue of bills of credit and engaged Charles LeRoux, goldsmith, engraver, and official silversmith of the City of New York, to engrave the plate of the Arms of New York to be printed on the bills. William Bradford was to print them.<sup>54</sup> After the usual delays, payment was assured and LeRoux engraved the plates after which he turned them over to Bradford.<sup>55</sup> Four years later, Bradford was commissioned to print another issue of bills of credit<sup>56</sup> and he was allowed £30 for having new plates engraved. Instead of doing so, however, he used the ones LeRoux had made for the previous issue. It did not take LeRoux long to discover that he had been bypassed and on June 12, 1719, he memorialized the Assembly in which he exposed Bradford's operations. The committee appointed to investigate reported a week later that Bradford had not had new plates made and that the old ones had already been paid for. Consequently, on June 24, Bradford was ordered to repay £30 to the Treasury.<sup>57</sup>

In another case involving keen competition in the sale of almanacs, Bradford in 1729 was accused by Titan Leeds in the

<sup>53</sup> DeArmand, pp. 7-10.

<sup>54</sup> Wilberforce Eames, Ms. Notes, 1715 (New York Public Library).

<sup>55</sup> *Calendar of Council Minutes, 1668-1783*, New York State Library, *History Bulletin* 6 (1902), 260-261.

<sup>56</sup> *Calendar of Council Minutes*, p. 268.

<sup>57</sup> *Assembly Journal*, I, 434, 438.



*Pennsylvania Gazette* of plagiarism in copying *The Genuine Leed's Almanack for the Year of Christian Account, 1730*. He declared *The American Almanack* printed by Bradford to be a "base and scandalous Counterfeit, printed without my Consent or Knowledge . . ." <sup>58</sup> Bradford responded in the same paper a week later that the assertion was a base and notorious falsehood, "for altho'," he went on, "his Almanack is Re-printed, . . . Whether W. Bradford Re-printed said Almanack or not, he claims a Property in it because about five Years ago he agreed with Titan for his Copy so long as W. B. liv'd, for a certain Sum of Money, . . . But . . . the famous Sam. Keimer steps in and offers Titan more Money for it, Titan accepts and sells it a second time . . . Upon the said Bradford's being thus disappointed, Felix Leeds [Titan's Brother] publishes an Almanack; No sooner came this forth but Titan and Sam Keimer send out their Advertisements, and tell the World, That *Felix could not write an Almanack; That it was a Counterfeit, a Cheat and Imposition upon the Publick;* and this base and abusive Method they continued Year after Year without any Provocation, and W & A Bradford lay under their Scandals without Interruption . . ." <sup>59</sup> It is interesting to note that *The American Almanack* continued to be published yearly in New York through 1743.

In the 63rd year of his age, William Bradford decided to publish a weekly newspaper and during the first week of November, 1725, the first issue of the *New York Gazette* appeared—the first regular newsheet ever to be issued in the city, and the only one until 1733. It was never a well-edited product. Foreign news predominated and advertising was sparse. Subscriptions, too, were none too plentiful, for some three years later in the issue for June 17, 1728 (Number 137), the following advertisement appears: By the Advice and encouragement of some Gentlemen, for the Information of the Publick, We began to Publish this Gazette the first of November, 1725. (not doubting but we should have subscribers to take off such a Number as might defray the Charge) and the first of May last it

<sup>58</sup> Leonard W. Labaree, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven, 1959), I, 166.

<sup>59</sup> Labaree, p. 167, quoting *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 10, 1729.

was Two years & a half that we have continued its Publication; but having calculated the Charge of Printing and Paper for the same, as also how much will arise to defray that Charge (when all those that take this Gazette have paid in what is due to the first of May last) do find that we shall loose Thirty-Five Pounds in the two years and a half, by Publishing this Paper, besides the trouble and Charge of Correspondents, collecting the News, making up Pacquets and conveying the same to those in the Country who take them. And therefore if some further Encouragement be not given, by a larger Number of Subscribers for said Gazette, we must let it fall, and cease Publishing the same.

Many Persons that take this Gazette being above a year behind on their Payments and some not having paid since the first publishing of the same, They are now desired to pay in what is due, in order to enable the further Publication if it be continued.<sup>60</sup>

Although journalism seems not to have been a lucrative venture for him, he printed 993 issues. In 1742 or 1743, he took his former apprentice, Henry DeForeest, into partnership and the paper was published by them both until the issue of November 19, 1744, to be succeeded the following week by DeForeest's *New York Evening Post*.<sup>61</sup>

There is no doubt that the acquisition of a constant and sufficient supply of paper was a problem to be reckoned with in the publication of his newspaper. A year before he started publication, he undoubtedly had this in mind when he petitioned the New York Assembly for the sole right of making paper in the province for a certain number of years. A bill granting this privilege passed the House but failed in the Council.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, it is not surprising to find that, according to Isaiah Thomas, Bradford was operating a paper mill in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, in 1728.<sup>63</sup> A year later Bradford offered a reward for the return of an indentured servant who had run away from his paper mill and who was described as "a paper maker by trade."<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *The New York Gazette*, no. 137, June 17, 1728.

<sup>61</sup> Clarence S. Brigham, *History and Bibliography of American Newspapers 1690-1820* (Worcester, Mass., 1947), I, 633-5.

<sup>62</sup> Stokes, *Chronology*, 1724, July 6.

<sup>63</sup> Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, 2nd ed. (Worcester, Mass., 1874), I, 294.

<sup>64</sup> *American Weekly Mercury* (Philadelphia), July 3-10, 1729.

Certificates of survey, made in 1731 and 1732, indicate Bradford was the owner of two tracts of land there, one of six acres and the other, upon which his mill was located, of thirty-six acres.<sup>65</sup> Between this time and 1734, he continued to add to his land holdings in Elizabethtown until he had acquired a total of at least 160 acres including a large plantation which he advertised for sale in his *New York Gazette* of July 15 of that year. The plantation contained, "about Ninety Acres, forty Acres of it cleared and the whole within a good Fence. On which there is 2 good Houses, a Garden, Orchard and a Barn. Or it may be divided into two settlements there being two dwelling Houses thereon, suitable for a Tanner, or other Trades-man. There is a good stone Quarry upon it and 7 Acres of Salt Meadow belonging to it. It is situate about two Miles from the Church and Meeting House in Elizabeth-Town. And about a Mile and a half from the said Plantation there is 70 acres of good woodland, wherein there is a dry Swamp, called Grassy-Swamp, easy to be made into good Meadow, which is also to be Sold . . ."

The following year the property still had not been sold and Bradford consequently announced that, "On Wednesday the 23 of April next at the Paper Mill in Elizabethtown there will be sold at Public Vendue to the highest Bidder all sorts of Household Goods, Cattle, Horses, Hogs, Cart, Plows, Harrows with Iron Teeth, and other Utensils: The Plantation adjoining the said Mill will also be Sold which contains about Ninety Acres . . ."<sup>66</sup> The plantation was again offered for sale in his *Gazette* of August 25, 1735, and was presumably sold some time subsequent to that date.

The late Elmer T. Hutchinson of Elizabeth, New Jersey, a member of the American Antiquarian Society, spent considerable time in locating the exact site of the mill, and finally determined it to be on a small stream now known as the Elizabeth River about 300 yards south of Salem Road in the present town of Hill-

<sup>65</sup> William Bradford, Miscellaneous Ms. (New-York Historical Society), Certificates of Survey by Daniel Dod to James Alexander, Surveyor General of New Jersey, April 30, 1731, August 1, 1732.

<sup>66</sup> *New York Gazette*, April 7, 1735.

side.<sup>67</sup> The site was identifiable as late as 1953 by the stone foundations on which a subsequent mill building had stood before it burned in 1917.<sup>68</sup>

On November 5, 1733, John Peter Zenger, Bradford's former apprentice who had established a printing press of his own in 1726, began the publication of a rival newspaper, *The New York Weekly Journal*, and almost at once it was used as a political organ by the popular party. Bradford's *Gazette*, on the other hand, reflected the attitudes of the ruling faction. A series of attacks on the governor and his friends in the *Journal* culminated in 1734 with Zenger's arrest on a charge of libel.<sup>69</sup> He was brought to trial and, as in the case of Bradford in Philadelphia, the court and the government contended that the jury was simply to find whether Zenger had printed the offending statements. The jury was to assume that they were libelous irrespective of their truthfulness. This was the point upon which Bradford had contested his case forty-three years earlier, but now Bradford was seventy-one years old; he had experienced the effects of a governor's wrath on two occasions; he derived much of his income through his appointment to governmental offices in two colonies; he was, in fact, at the mercy of William Cosby who was Governor of the Province of New Jersey, as well as of New York. Hence, he did not rally to the cause. The necessity of proving a libel was affirmed and the freedom of the press was won without Bradford's support. When the occasion arose in 1736, he defended himself at length in his *Gazette*. He declared himself to have been neutral in the Cosby controversy, adding ". . . yet as I am and have been above forty years last past a Servant to the Government (and consequently to several Governours during that time) so I have according to my duty, some times printed in my *Gazette* some observations which the late Governour's Friends, thought proper to make upon what the other Party printed against him, and for so doing Mr. Zenger, or some of the Party, have been angry with me, as I may

<sup>67</sup> Elmer T. Hutchinson Ms. Notes (New Jersey Historical Society).

<sup>68</sup> Site visited in 1953 by the author and Mr. Hutchinson.

<sup>69</sup> Stokes, Chronology, 1733, November 5.

suppose, (for I know not of any thing else that I have done by which they could be offended with me, they having formerly been my very good Friends) they have from time to time, Reflected upon me and against my *Gazette*, insinuating that what I published was not true." He concluded by stating that he intended to be "obedient to the King, and to all that are put in Authority under him."<sup>70</sup>

In 1744, at the age of eighty-one, William Bradford retired. He had continuously operated a printing establishment for sixty-two years and had printed thousands of titles. During his career, he occupied successively five locations in New York City, first at the Pearl Street address previously mentioned. Then in 1698, he moved to Stone Street, in 1714, to the northwest corner of Hanover Square, in 1734, to another (unidentified) site in Hanover Square, and in 1737, to the south side of Pearl Street near Maiden Lane. One thousand and sixteen of his imprints are known to us today and of some 900 titles extant, some eighteen-hundred copies of them have been located in libraries scattered throughout the eastern United States, California and England. Yet, it would seem that he must have published many more. Had he, throughout his long career, averaged one issue from his press per week in addition to the publication of his newspaper, his output would have reached 3,224 imprints. If this estimate is accurate, then over two-thirds of his work has disappeared.

The quality of his work cannot be rated very high, notwithstanding the fact that he pioneered in his trade for many years. Throughout his career, the products of his press show broken type, irregular inking, numerous errors in pagination, broken and bent rules, and, for the most part, uninspired layout. In the various editions of the New York Laws which he issued in 1694, 1710, 1713, 1719, and 1726, the collations are especially difficult and they vary so in each copy that it is sometimes doubtful as to what constitutes a perfect copy. The confusion in pagination is appalling. Following his first edition of the Laws, when printing the subsequent annual acts he endeavored to continue the pagination

<sup>70</sup> *New York Gazette*, March 28, 1736.

and signature marks, but in so doing he ignored blank pages and made all kinds of errors. Then when he printed the other later editions, he sometimes reprinted with a new pagination and sometimes bound in the annual issues with the old paginations, thus resulting in duplicate pages and signature marks, as well as wide gaps.

Bradford's printing errors were a concern to his contemporaries as evidenced by a letter of Governor Bellomont to the Board of Trade in which he says, ". . . but as for a more correct book of the laws which you order me to send, 'tis not to be had. I sent for the printer and spoke to him about it, and he told me there was no remedy for it because he had nobody to correct the presse at the time he printed them."<sup>71</sup>

If his work was indifferent and if much of what came forth from his press has been lost, his accomplishments were not inconsiderable and his importance as a printer remains untarnished. His establishment was a veritable seed farm for future printers, having had as apprentices John Peter Zenger, Henry DeForest, James Parker, and his own son, Andrew; and he was himself the progenitor of four generations of printers and publishers. He printed New York's first lawbook (1694), the first published proceedings of an American legislature (New York, 1695), the first New York paper currency (1709), the first American *Book of Common Prayer* (1706), the first history of New York (1727), and the first copperplate plan of the city (1730), as well as New York's first newspaper.

In his retirement, he lived probably at the corner of Hanover Square and Stone Street close to his former haunts with his son William, Jr., who had become a pewterer. His first wife, Elizabeth, had died in 1731, as had his son Andrew in 1742; his daughter, Tacy, had married John Hyat of Philadelphia; and Bradford himself had remarried, having as his second wife a widow by the name of Smith.<sup>72</sup> Despite the variety of enterprises upon which

<sup>71</sup> Letter, Earl of Bellomont to the Lords of Trade, New York, May 15, 1699, quoted in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York*, IV, 522.

<sup>72</sup> DeArmand, p. 242; Purple, pp. 3-8.

he had been engaged, the numerous sources of his income and his land holdings, there is no indication that he retired with any degree of wealth. In fact, on three separate occasions, complaints were lodged against him in the Supreme Court of New York for nonpayment of debts—twice in 1737 by John Burnet for £100 and by Isaac Levy for £104, and again as late as 1745, after his retirement, by John and William Burnet for £190:11:7 1/2.<sup>73</sup> Whether because of concern over his financial condition or because of old age, he began to fail in health. A letter addressed to James Alexander in May, 1746, gives every appearance of having been written by one suffering with advancing arteriosclerosis. It is barely legible and makes little sense with lines running together ending with one short final paragraph which reads, "I mean if they will please to let me know . . . to make over to them all that I have . . . I cannot write sense. I am your Servant but a poor one. Will. Bradford."<sup>74</sup>

William Bradford died on Saturday evening, May 23, 1752, in his ninetieth year. Isaiah Thomas reports that "on the morning of the day which closed his life, he walked over a great part of the city."<sup>75</sup> It is, perhaps, fitting to close this account of his life with a tribute paid him by his former apprentice, James Parker, who said that he was, ". . . a Man of great Sobriety and Industry; a real Friend to the Poor and Needy; and kind and affable to all; but acquiring an Estate happened not to be his Faculty, not withstanding his living at a Time when others, of not half his good Qualifications, amassed considerable Ones: He was a True Englishman, and his Complaisance and Affection to his Wives, of which he had two, was peculiarly great; and without the least Exaggeration it may be said that what he had acquired with the first, by the same Carriage was lost with the second. His Temperance was exceedingly conspicuous and he was almost a Stranger to sickness all his Life: He had left off Business for several Years

<sup>73</sup> William Bradford, Miscellaneous Ms. (New-York Historical Society).

<sup>74</sup> William Bradford, Miscellaneous Ms. (New-York Historical Society).

<sup>75</sup> Thomas, II, 95.

past, and being quite worn out with old Age and Labour, his Lamp of Life went out for want of Oil. . . ”<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> *Weekly Gazette and New York Post Boy*, May 25, 1752. Bradford was buried in the grounds of Trinity Church. The inscription on his tombstone, now in the New-York Historical Society, bears the incorrect birth date of 1660. The wrong date also appears in Parker's tribute.



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